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The Classical Weekly

VOL. XV, No. 12

MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 1922

WHOLE No. 408

ON MAKING NEW WORDS¹

Words deliberately invented exhibit as different degrees of vitality as incubator chicks, many of them perishing at birth. An eccentric professor of Greek proposed and advocated through the press for some years the word *Usona*, made, to supply a much needed noun, from the initial letters of the name of the United States of North America. It has survived only to denominate a laundry, a bakery, and a hotel in his own city of St. Louis. From Missouri, and from a very small and obscure town at that, comes also the popular science of *osteopathy*, of which the name was chosen by the founder, Dr. A. T. Still, no longer ago than 1893. It does not owe its vogue to the support of the homeopaths or the allopaths, but seems to have taken its place, nevertheless, as one of the recognized routes to health or the grave, and a new word has become familiar to all.

Sometimes a new word comes into immediate vogue; at other times it is compelled to wait. The term *pragmatism* lay dormant in a magazine article for the space of a generation and was then swept into popularity on the reputation of a well-known philosopher. The fortune of the word *telegram* was different. It is said to have been made in Albany, in 1857, to take the place of the once prevalent 'telegraphic despatch'. Its success was immediate and well-merited. It is really one of the happiest coinages ever struck. It fails from a good Greek font, is not easily abbreviated, a thick tongue can pronounce it, and a dull ear can catch it. On the same model we have added *aerogram* and *lettergram* to our vocabulary, both of which are kept upon probation, although they are printed on the forms of the operating companies. The former ought strictly to be *aerotelegram*, but the need of brevity and the pull of a strong analogy evoked the shorter form. In the meantime we are saying 'wireless message'. A better chance of survival is in prospect for *lettergram*, which is recommended to the public ear not only by sound and analogy, but also by its obvious significance. A few years ago we were offered *marconigram* and *conigram*, but the prejudice against derivatives of proper names is obdurate.

Various are the names that have been invented for the ubiquitous moving-picture show, and most en-

lightening, from the point of view of the public taste and fancy, are the neologisms thus far created. The first name given to the world was *biograph*, faultlessly formed, but too sober, and it proved ephemeral. Since that time we have seen *vilagraphs* and *photoplays*, words of limited vogue, which appeal to an obvious preference for trisyllables accented on the first and the last syllable, of the type of *telegram*, *telephone*, and *photograph*. An effort after the selfexplanatory may be observed in *lifeorama*, but this is too cheap a hybrid even for the man in the street. One often sees the *nickette* and the *nickelodium*, of which the one is cute and the other euphonious. The European term, *kinematograph*, which started from Paris, is unsatisfactory because it is not selfpronouncing in English. Those who speak by the card will say *kinématograph*, but the Concise Oxford Dictionary allows two other possibilities, and three pronunciations are too many for any word. This word is commonly clipped to *kinema*. A more pleasing word is *kinemacolor*, irregularly made, but selfpronouncing and selfexplanatory. In the meantime the American public says 'movies'.

The early displacement of *daguerreotype* by *photograph* suggests not less the mechanical and artistic advance than a growing reluctance to name discoveries by derivatives of proper names and a concomitant desire that new words shall be composed of significant parts. It likewise demonstrates the popularity attained during the middle of the past century by amphimacers of the type of *telegraph*. Even in days before the civil war a famous wit of New York, N. P. Willis, now almost forgotten, wrote newspaper sketches which he called *hurrygraphs*. Since those days we have produced a swarm of these trisyllabic *graphs*, such as *phonograph*, *dictograph*, *rotograph*, *stylograph*, and such journalese monsters as *daily-graph* and *fakeograph*, the latter denoting a lying biography. A score of others, like *heliograph*, *lineograph*, and *ikonograph*, might be quoted merely to prove the hold of the *graph* syllable upon the imagination of the common people. Punch once offered its readers, not without a touch of classic satire, a *Philomelagraph*. The *phone* family, too, is popular and prolific. We now have *interphones* for the house, *otophones*, *auxetophones*, and *electrophones* for the deaf, and, as varieties of the good old talking-machine, *musophones*, *cortinaphones*, and plain *gramophones*. The latest we have seen is *marimbaphone*.

The popular mind has ready apprehension of the *cracies*, *ologies*, and *manias*, terminations that lend themselves easily to humorous and contemptuous effects. We recall an illiterate old cobbler with a

¹ Reference may be made to a collection of essays, by Professor Brander Matthews, entitled *Essays on English* (Scribner's, 1921). In the following essays, at least, the reader will find material akin to that brought together so interestingly by Professor DeWitt: *Is the English Language Degenerating?* (1-30); *What is Pure English* (33-57); *The Vicissitudes of the Vocabulary* (81-96); *The Latest Novelties in Language* (99-117); *Newspaper English* (121-135). Professor Matthews thinks highly of newspaper English.

penchant for politics who used to rail against *moneys-tocrats*. Any of us is apt to resort at times to words like *mobocracy* and *snobocracy*. College students are responsible for the term *cliquocracy*. Less venomous are the *ologies*. Temperance talk is *alcoholology*. Disdain for the mushroom science of osteopathy is expressed by *spinology* and *bonology*. *Summerology* was a good-natured student-term to denote the courses of a famous Yale professor, himself a word-coiner who suggested *societology* for a branch of sociology. A certain University was swept by an attack of *Whitmania*, something akin to *Ibsenitis*, but more virulent. The American people have often been accused of *megalomania*, a gibe that Canadians can no longer afford to indulge. Emerson long ago detected in the traveling public of Boston an absurd *Italomania*. Those who become excited over the decline of Greek studies are *Graecomaniacs*. We have heard of an *egomaniac*, which must be something like a *super-egotist*. Students of Nietzsche may be warned against the fascination of *supermania*.

Suffixes derived from the Romance languages seem to be more seductive than the prosaic Latin or scientific Greek, and are much preferred in consequence by the purveyors of proprietary medicines and other articles of commerce that do not depend upon merit for their sale. As a business method this may be sound enough, but it works a sad effect upon the termination, divorcing it in the popular imagination from all the pretty effects which everyone must admire who has chanced to hear an Italian or a Spanish child talking to her doll. Most unfortunate among such endings have been *let* or *elte*, and *ine*, also spelt *ene* and *yne*. Butter that never was cream is *oleomargerine* or *butterine*. For your nails, use *ongoline*, for your nerves, *nervine*, and for your excess of person, *reducine*. *Nuttolene* is for the vegetarian, *lagerine* for the abstemious, *tuberculozyne* for the phthisical, and *disinfectine* for germophobes. The fact that *vaseline* is a protected trade-name has failed to keep it out of the most exclusive dictionaries, and whatever honor there may be in this is shared by *listerine*. Sadder still is the fate of *let*, which is degraded to the denotation of such fancy nostrums as *regulets* and *dyspeplets*, not to mention a score of others so well advertised that unpaid mention is superfluous. Something dainty is intended to be denoted by *toasterette* and *oysterette*, something devilish by *scooterette*, a sort of motor-car. There is derision in *suffragette*, the respectful term being *suffragist*.

The automatic piano-players and such like affect a soft, melodious terminal note, such as we hear in *pianola*, *victrola*, *autonola*, *phonola*, *amberola*, and *graphonola*. As this industry expands, we may expect to hear of *bannerolas*, *columbiolas*, *gloriolas*, and why not of *Melbiolas*, *Nordicolas*, *Carusiolas*, and, to be strictly up to date, *Carrilliolas*? Perhaps it will happen that a *trilonola* or a *sirenola* will be preferred. The unlettered instinct for word-making is not infallible and produces such disgusting misnomers as *pukvola* for the face, *dyola* for dyeing, and *figola* for eating. Setting aside such debasements of a

euphonious suffix, contrast the dainty effect of the romantic *ola* with the sober Latin in *multimillionaire*, *multifunneled* steamers, *multigraph* copy-makers, *multitype* type-setting machine, and *multicone* fly-catchers (all of these are relatively new words). The Latin was a fine language in which to speak plainly.

Latin meets Latin in the rivalry between the forms *sanitarium* and *sanitorium*. An excellent reason for expecting the former to be preferred is the fact that our accepted adjective is *sanitary*, not *sanitory*. Yet it is hardly doubtful that the deciding factor in the ultimate choice will be the analogy of *auditorium*, a good Latin word as old as Quintilian, which has long since caught the public ear by its sonorousness and its agreeable accent. On the same model we have *crematorium*, which one is rather surprised to find in the Concise Oxford Dictionary. Still its lineage is so excellent that it deserves to mingle in good company. The preference of the unsophisticated word-maker is attested by such a coinage as *theatorium*. In many a city one may also behold a gorgeous swimming-establishment called a *natatorium*, and poor indeed is the town in these days that cannot boast a *suititorium* or a *pantitorium* where clothes are pressed while you wait. We have also seen a *pantorium*, but the analogy of *auditorium* calls for five syllables, and the reduplication is pleasant. The latest coinages of this type that we have noted are the *cancerlorium*, which explains itself, and the *preventorium*, of which the purpose can easily be conjectured. The preference for double iambs combined with the pleasant reduplication of *t* has enabled *preventitive* to triumph over *preventive* in popular parlance and I have heard a paper-hanger venture upon *incentitive*.

The analogy of likes and opposites starts many a novelty in language. Mr. Chesterton, not very happily, has used *postjudice* as an antonym of *prejudice*. On the model of *maladministration* we have seen *malorganization*. A striking example of association of ideas overruling formative analogy is *reportorial*, as an analogue of *editorial*. We should have expected *reporter* to give us *reporterial*, as *minister* gives *ministerial*, but the sonorous assonance of *reportorial* served to upset the law. On a similar analogy we might have *newspaporian*, of which we have noted a single occurrence. The introduction of gas for illuminating purposes displaced the *chandelier* by the *gasolier*, and this was succeeded by the *electrolier*. The good old *hippodrome* has been followed by the *motordrome*, the *aerodrome*, and the *photodrome*, the last being one of the numerous names for the moving-picture theater. In Paris they have *ratadromes*, where terriers make havoc among the rats, but the sport has hardly reached America, at least under this pompous name. Trade rivalry gives us such pairs as *congoleum* and *linoleum*, *antiphlogistine* and *antithermoline*. A curious error of etymology was committed by a Chicago man who started a *parvazine*, supposing such a form to be a correct antonym of *magazine*, which has nothing to do with the Latin. Some of these formations are unintentionally humor-

ous, such as *contenderous*, from *cantankerous*. If the dentist who straightens teeth can enhance his dignity as an *orthodontist*, the brother who extracts them may ennoble himself as an *exodontist*. As Eve came from Adam's side, so the *superwoman* has been born of the *superman*.

It is curious to note that the living, Anglo-Saxon element in our speech, which contributes most of all to powerful stylistic effects, is moribund so far as the formation of new words is concerned, although it still continues to throw off such exquisitely expressive compounds as *wind-jammer*, *sky-scraper*, *brain-storm*, *hen-minded*, and *nature-faker*. Nevertheless it is the 'dead' Latin and Greek elements that are most fecund. When William Barnes, the Dorsetshire poet, proposed *folkwain* for *omnibus*, the public did not take him seriously. No better reception was accorded to the late Professor Sumner of Yale when he offered the name *folkways*, on the excellent analogy of *folklore*, to denote a certain branch of sociology. We are rejecting *airman* and *birdman* for *aviator*. We still prefer *gasoline* and *automobile*, while our English cousins use *petrol* and *motor-car*. The exactness of such terms as *monoplane* and *biplane* helps to retain *aeroplane* in place of *airship*, and *hydroplane* rather than *waterplane* or *seaplane*. The helplessness of the Anglo-Saxon is splendidly demonstrated if you attempt a pure English name for the amphibious *hydro-aeroplane*. Someone has proposed *aerobus* for *aero-omnibus*, but this lies yet in prospect. The *terraplane*, half motor-car and half aeroplane, is said to be an accomplished fact.

The journalese dialect is most prolific in new words, most of them as ephemeral as mosquitos. For all that, the daily newspaper is a mart where neologisms get their best chance of life, and, even if few individuals survive, one may yet perceive there the general drift of the language and the persistent efforts of our speech to procreate itself. Nor is the journalist to be despised as a critic of words. He reads and writes more than other people and is more regularly and incessantly forced to express himself. It is he that clips *pacifist* to *pacifist*, for example, breaking with a rule for the sake of euphony. He is less hampered by literary conventions and fearlessly tries out the verbs that come from nouns and adjectives. He gives us such forms as *visualize*, *socialize*, *institutionalize*, and even *affinitize*, novelties that are echoed in the pulpits of preachers who go beyond the Bible for their texts. Novels are *dramatized* and dramas are *novelized*. The moving-picture show *depersonalizes* the life of the town. To drive out and keep out the bubonic plague the Western seaports must be *deratized*, freed from rats, a word we might have been spared.

In making a survey of new words one must observe a number of conspicuous tendencies. The hybrid has little chance of survival, and so we do not expect the *watermobile* to survive very long. Classical suffixes attached to English words, such as *tinkeritis* and *talkophobia*, always are to be placed in the realm of *redogatory* remarks and will never see Parnassus.

In this class we have lately noted *Tennysonunculus*, a satisfying mouthful. One notes also the great preference of suffixes over prefixes. It is for this reason that a word like *disservice* seems pedantic, although the *antis* are prevalent enough in such terms as *antioptionist*, opposed to local option, and *anti-conscriptionist*, full of polysyllabic scorn. Unmistakable, too, is the hospitality towards words from Romance languages. The *cafeteria* has spread from Los Angeles as a center, although a Spanish lady was overheard to say that there was nothing Spanish about it except the mispronunciation. Lately a sister institution has sprung up in the *grocery*, but would women ever frequent it were it called a *selfservegrocery*? It is the Latin element in English that is fertile and attractive.

It is but a mischievous convention of common thought that we say a language is living if it happens to be the daily medium of communication of an extant race. The real life of a language lies in its capacity to take care of itself under the changing conditions of contemporary life. Speech, as a function of a living organism, is subject to the same disintegration and replacement as the tissues of the body and the social institutions, and must possess the capacity of renewing its substance. Its life lies in its prefixes and its suffixes, in its capacity for forming compounds, or in whatever mutations and combinations the particular language may have inherited for the expression of new ideas. The Latin of Cicero died because it succeeded perfectly in cutting itself off from the speech of the people. He spake as never man spake. The vulgar Latin did not die. At least, if it died, it left heirs, and, as a Greek proverb says, he that leaves a son does not die.

VICTORIA COLLEGE,
TORONTO, CANADA

NORMAN W. DEWITT

REVIEWS

The Pronunciation of Greek and Latin: The Sounds and Accents. By E. H. Sturtevant. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (1920). Pp. vii + 225.

Professor Sturtevant wrote his book with the intention of following the footsteps of Blass, Seelmann, and Lindsay in the light of the evidence which has been discovered since the appearance of their handbooks. He has been very successful in the thing he has attempted to do, and the result is a text-book more serviceable than its predecessors, for both student and teacher, and one that is, besides, a collection of the recent literature on the subject which will be appreciated by other workers in the field.

The improvement over Blass is to be found chiefly in the treatment of the digraph EI and kindred matters. It is due not to the discovery of new evidence, but to a sounder judgment of the old. Blass's error has long been recognized, but it has stood for years as a pedagogical nuisance, and it is a pleasure to have a handbook from which it is eliminated. On the other